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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000310

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/18/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: SUDANESE PITCH (AGAIN) AN ERITREAN-LED MEDIATION

REF: A. FEBRUARY 26 EMAIL - MCINTYRE-AF/SPG

[1](#)B. ASMARA 307

Classified By: AMB SCOTT H. DELISI FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (C) DCM met with Sudanese DCM in Eritrea Hussein Mohammed Hussein at his request on March 14. Hussein asked for clarification of the USG position on a proposed Eritrean-led mediation for Darfur, a subject which he had first raised with DCM on February 25 (Ref A). DCM responded that the U.S. supported the UN/AU mediation effort. She added that the U.S. would continue to welcome the Eritreans' views on how they see their role within an international mediation. DCM reminded Hussein that since their last conversation on the same subject, the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) still had not approached anyone in the U.S. government, nor to our knowledge the UN, AU, or even the Norwegians (who have championed a role for the GSE) with a concrete proposal.

[1](#)2. (C) Hussein commented that Eritrean President Isaias and Sudanese President Bashir had discussed Darfur in meetings held in Doha March 7-8 with Sheikh Hamid Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar. While he professed ignorance as to the substance of the Doha discussion on Darfur, Hussein said he believed that the meeting had included a proposal for Qatar to serve as the conduit to the international community to reconcile the proposals for an Eritrean/Libyan-led Darfur mediation with a UN/AU initiative. (Hussein's briefing on other aspects of the Qatar meetings reported in Ref B.) Hussein also said he had spoken recently with the French Ambassador to Eritrea who had expressed French support for Eritrean involvement in a mediation. (Comment: Hussein did not elaborate whether the French supported an Eritrean-led mediation or advocated a GSE role within the framework of an international mediation. The French Ambassador told Ambassador in a separate discussion, however, that he envisioned Eritrea playing a role as part of a larger mediation process. End Comment.) Hussein added that the French Foreign Minister would be in Asmara during the week of March 19 to discuss Darfur with the Eritreans. The French Ambassador claimed to have no knowledge of a visit in a meeting with Ambassador.

[1](#)3. (C) DCM asked Hussein whether Yemane Ghebreab, Political Chief of the ruling PFDJ and the GSE's Sudan expert, had been making progress in his meetings with the non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Hussein commented that Ghebreab was finding his discussions with the DPA non-signatories "difficult", noting that unlike the CPA talks

in which John Garang emerged as a clear leader, the Darfurians have been unable to coalesce behind a single figure. (Comment: Ghebreab has been in N'djamena for over a month now reportedly trying to unite the various non-DPA factions behind a single agenda. He apparently has extended his visit several times supporting Hussein's comments that he is fighting an uphill battle. End Comment.)

¶4. (C) DCM inquired about the political situation between Chad and Sudan following the February meeting in Tripoli. Hussein said the relationship between Chad and Sudan was now "perfect", commenting that both countries had agreed to stop providing safehaven to each other's rebel factions, and to this end, Chad had recently refused a visa to one SLM leader. He added that Libya was playing a proactive role in negotiating between the Government of Chad and the Chadian rebel groups. Hussein further noted that Eritrea, Libya, Chad and Sudan already have sent 15 military advisors each to study the Sudan-Chad border. This study is in preparation for an agreed-upon deployment of 600 soldiers from each country in order to provide monitoring and control over the border. (Comment: Post has heard rumors, separately, from the Norwegians and one of our regular Sudanese interlocuters, that Iran was also approached and agreed to contribute border monitors either in lieu of, or in addition to, this proposed force. Perhaps only a coincidence, Post notes that Iran contributes personnel to the UNMEE force monitoring the Ethiopia and Eritrean border -- to our knowledge, the only UN operation in the world in which the Iranians participate. End Comment.)

¶5. (C) Comment: Hussein clearly requested the meeting to press again for U.S. support of an Eritrean-led mediation outside of the UN/AU framework. He continues to assert that

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the Eritreans recognize the need for "international involvement" in a mediation, although he provided no further illumination on what sort of role is envisioned for the broader international community. Given that Yemane Ghebreab continues to pursue separate track discussions with the DPA non-signatories without trying to engage the broader international community, post remains skeptical about GSE intentions. The GSE's receptivity to UN Special Envoy Eliasson, who is slated to visit Asmara March 21, may provide some indication as to the GSE's intentions toward working cooperatively within a larger UN/AU initiative. End Comment. DeLisi